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## MARCH MEETING.

A stated monthly meeting of the Society was held this day, Thursday, March 12, at eleven o'clock, A.M.; the President in the chair.

Donations were announced from the American Philosophical Society; the Chicago Historical Society; the Sussex Archæological Society; Mr. Thomas Y. Crowell; William J. Dale, M.D.; B. P. Johnson, Esq.; H. Phillips, jun., Esq; David Pulsifer, Esq.; Hon. Joseph Segar; M. Jules E. Souchard; Rev. Frederic A. Whitney; Nathaniel Willis, Esq.; and from Messrs. Folsom, Lincoln (S.), Robbins (C.), Shurtleff, Wheatland, and Winthrop, of the Society.

The President laid on the table a new volume of the Society's Collections, being Volume Sixth of the Fourth Series, published under the charge of the Committee on the publication of the Winthrop Papers.

On motion of Mr. R. FROTHINGHAM, it was *voted*, That the thanks of the Society be presented to the Hon. Robert C. Winthrop, Charles Deane, Esq., and Rev. Dr. Robbins, the Publishing Committee of the volume of the Society's Collections, this day presented to the Society, for their valuable and most satisfactory service; and especially to the President, for his liberality in the use of the rare and important original material from which the main portion of this volume has been selected.

*Voted*, That the same gentlemen be hereby re-appointed, and be requested to continue their labors in

preparing another volume, in continuation of the Winthrop Papers, to be published at such time as in their judgment may be expedient.

A letter was read from Rev. A. L. Baury, presenting to the Society a piece of plate, supposed to have been attached to a coffin, which was found buried in the guano, about twelve feet deep, on the middle Chincha Island, on the coast of Peru. It had been exhibited to the Society of Antiquaries of London, and estimated by that body to be three or four hundred years old. At the Government Assay Office in London, it was pronounced to be pure silver.

*Voted*, That the thanks of the Society be presented to Rev. Mr. Baury for this donation to the cabinet.

Hon. Luther Bradish of New York was elected an Honorary Member, and Rev. William G. Eliot, D.D., of St. Louis, a Corresponding Member, of the Society.

In view of the annual meeting, the President nominated, as a Committee to examine the Treasurer's accounts, Hon. Amos A. Lawrence, Hon. Charles G. Loring, and Hon. William Sturgis; and, as a Committee of Nomination of Officers of the Society, Rev. Dr. Lothrop, Hon. Lorenzo Sabine, and Henry A. Whitney, Esq.

Colonel ASPINWALL communicated a paper on "William Vassall no Factionist."

*William Vassall no Factionist.*

When the ancient Egyptians followed out their custom of sitting in judgment upon the character of the recently dead, all the means and materials for forming a correct decision were at

hand, fresh in the memory of multitudes of witnesses, friends, and enemies ; and, of course, it was comparatively easy to frame a faithful and permanent record of the merits of the departed. Any long postponement of their posthumous adjudication would have deprived them of these ready means of information, and have increased, to an injurious extent, the chances of error. After the lapse of a century, they might often, as we sometimes do, in pure ignorance, have fastened a badge of infamy upon men of earlier days who merited the gratitude of the world, or have canonized a rogue for a saint.

Those who canvass the merits of individuals not in official stations, but more or less conspicuous here one or two centuries ago, can gain no light, except from the few necessarily imperfect, and sometimes deceptive, data which are scattered over the pages of the printed books, or buried away in manuscripts, connected with our local history. A laborious and faithful search for facts frequently leaves the inquirer at fault, because he has failed to ferret out every hidden atom extant, or because some unknown letter or document has, in the interim, been brought to light, that overthrows all his preconceived opinions.

Under such circumstances, it would be unjust to deal out harsh criticisms upon any honest commentator, who, from a misplaced confidence in his guide, or writing (as correspondents of the periodical press generally do) on the spur of the moment, happens to express a wrong and injurious opinion in regard to some one of our early colonists. Yet the cause of truth, charity to the living, and justice to the dead, make it a duty, wherever it can be done, to rescue from unmerited opprobrium the good name of any one who is no longer on earth to plead in his own behalf.

Under a sense of this duty, I wish to say something in defence of the character of William Vassall, one of the earliest and most active of the original promoters of the settlement of

Massachusetts. The fitness or unfitness of the family motto, whether as regards the inscription on General M'Clellan's sword or the peculiar characteristics of individuals of the Vassall Family, I leave to those who think the game worth pursuing. My purpose is to do him justice by bringing forward the whole truth. Part of it has recently been told in the journals of this city.

The opinions of Winthrop, Hubbard, and Winslow, have been cited to show that William Vassall was "of a busy, factious spirit," and "always opposed to the Civil Government of the country and the way of the churches here." They were undoubtedly sincere in their opinions. Judged by their standard, he was little better than a breeder of sedition. The Colonial Government, both in Church and State, arrogated an infallibility nearly as absolute as that of the Papacy. The system and the acts of neither branch were allowed to be questioned. Even to petition for redress of legalized grievances was held to be contempt, if not defiance, of the Government; and, accordingly, it was punished by fines, imprisonment, disfranchisement, and exile. In religious belief and practice, every one was required to conform to the local Orthodoxy, under like penalties; which were rigidly exacted, unless the party arraigned submissively recanted and acknowledged his error.

Hubbard depended chiefly upon Winthrop for the facts in his history, as far as the journal of the latter extends; and Winthrop, in turn, derived his knowledge of Vassall's factiousness from the account given him by Winslow.

I am aware that Hubbard gives an earlier date to the contumacy of Vassall; which would bring it within the personal observation of Winthrop, if it were true. He says Vassall "came over in 1630, when he was chosen Assistant; but not complying with the rest of his party, nor yet able to make a party amongst them, returned to England soon after." Here

Hubbard's habitual carelessness leads him into a misrepresentation of facts — a contradiction of his own previous statements, and a calumnious accusation of the dead — which is not supported by any contemporary account, but is substantially refuted by the actual condition and circumstances of the time and place.

Vassall was not chosen Assistant when he came over. He was made Assistant, in the outset, by the charter itself, by election on the 13th of the following May, by re-election on the 20th of October, in the same year (1629), when Winthrop was first chosen Governor, in contemplation of the transfer of the Charter and Government to this country; and as Assistant, on the 23d of March, 1630, attended, on board the “*Arbella*” at Southampton, the last Court of Assistants held in England (Mass. Rec., i. 11, 40, 60, 70).

He came over in the same fleet with Winthrop and the other Assistants; and went back, with his family, in the “*Lion*,” which was sent out for provisions in July, “the first month after his reaching these shores.” His family, at that time, comprised his wife and their four children from one to eleven years of age (Dudley, 15; Savage, Gen. Dict., iii. 52; iv. 367).

He never attended a court in this country; for there was none held till about a month after his departure. He could, consequently, have had no *public* opportunity for caballing against the Government (Mass. Rec., i. 73).

If he did so *privately*, it could not be for any difference of religious opinion; for he was as Orthodox as Winthrop himself. In England, he co-operated with his colleagues in providing ministers for the plantation, and signed the letters of advice and instructions intended for their guidance. He was the friend and correspondent, at a later period, of Cotton, and others of the Orthodox clergy: and in his letters respecting the church at Scituate, which eminently display the characteristics of the gentleman and Christian, he makes the basis of his

argument, against the claim of Chauncy to oust the remnant of Lathrop's congregation from their possession of the local Orthodox Church, the very same objections which Winthrop and the Boston clergy made to Chauncy ; namely, that he insisted on baptism by immersion exclusively, and on administering the Lord's Supper every sabbath and in the evening (Mass. Rec., i. 408 ; Deane's Scituate, 84-9, &c.).

That, within the three or four weeks of Vassall's stay, an opportunity for carrying on an intrigue against the Government would have been found in the actual busy and distressed condition of the infant Colony, is hardly conceivable. The attention of all and every one was absorbed in the hard and ceaseless struggle against personal and domestic wants and distress. The time of his stay also hardly sufficed for unlading, transporting, and securing the luggage and stores brought over. There was only one house in Charlestown, the chief place of resort. Most of the emigrants were rudely sheltered in tents and huts that did not exclude the rain. The stock of provisions had chiefly been spoiled on the voyage ; and fresh supplies were stopped by false reports that none were wanted. Bread, flesh-meat, and vegetables were scarcely to be had. The season for planting was past ; and the general food consisted ordinarily of clams, and occasionally of fish. The water was brackish ; and the only spring found was covered by the sea at each rise of the tide. It may well be supposed, that pestilence and death followed in the train of these hardships and privations. Every heart was appalled by the impending famine and the increasing mortality. Fuller the surgeon, on the 2d of August, wrote to Governor Bradford, "The sad news here is, that many are sick, and many are dead. I can do them no good ; for I want drugs, and things fitting to work with" (Mass. Hist. Coll., iii. 76 ; Rog. Clapp, 19, 38-40 ; Dudley, 16, 21).

The single circumstance, that Governor Winthrop was, at

this identical period, in deep affliction for the death of a beloved son in the flower and promise of early manhood, was quite enough to make any civilized man forbear to add to his cares or sorrows.

To account for Vassall's early return to England, it is only necessary to remember the contrast between the wild and cheerless plantation his family were then in and the loved old home they had left in England; and to reflect that he was a father, anxious to shield his wife and children from all unnecessary exposure to famine, disease, and death. The only course he ought to take, under the circumstances, was to return to England. He came back in 1635, with an addition of two daughters to his family; and, shortly after, fixed his abode at Scituate, where he built a house, and remained nearly eleven years. He then returned to England, and went afterwards to Barbadoes; and there he died about 1655 (Savage, *ut supra*; Winth., ii. 321).\*

It is worthy of notice, that Winthrop says nothing against Vassall until the month of May, 1646. In the preceding year, on the 25th of November, Edward Winslow wrote him a letter (Hutch. Coll., 153), in which he gives the history of "a matter of great concernment," originated in a Court of Assistants, — "*other things giving opportunity*," — when there were present only Governor Bradford, Mr. Collier, Captain Standish, and Winslow, (three out of the seven Assistants); and where it was agreed to postpone it to the next General Court,

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\* If the conjecture of Mr. Savage be true, that William Vassall came, in his first voyage, without either wife or children, the urgency of his return to England would be quite as obvious as it is upon the ground alleged in the text. Dudley, who knew, says, "With this ship ('Lion') returned Mr. Vassall, one of the Assistants, *with his family*. The list from the State-paper Office (Mass. Hist. Soc. Proceedings, iii. 393) says, Mr. Vassall and *his wife*. It is true, as Mr. Savage says, that "a child of one year old might naturally have claimed a mother's care:" but it would not be necessary for the mother, on that account, to remain in England; for her maternal care could have been bestowed on board ship as well on Ann, in 1630, as on her sister Mary, of the same age, in 1635, when the whole family came over.



although that was a Special Court of Elections, and not one of ordinary business. Being so propounded, “after a whole day’s agitation,” it was allowed, and entered on the waste-book; one deputy objecting, that “it did not properly concern that Court.” In the following week, the regular General Court was attended by several Assistants who had been absent on the two previous occasions, as well as by the Deputies generally. Prince, who had been ill, came in to the support of the Governor and Winslow; but Collier staid away, and Standish joined the opponents of the measure with two other magistrates. Exception was taken to the entry of the order, “after a tumultuous manner, as pernicious and destructive to the weal of the Government. . . . They cried out to have it defaced and crossed.” This the Governor, Prince, and Winslow could not consent to; but promised to leave it to the next Court, where it might be repealed if the country thought fit.

I can find no trace of any such order in the Records of the Colony of Plymouth; but in the Acts of the Commissioners of the United Colonies, subjoined to those records, there is (vol. i. 81) a recommendation to the General Courts of the Colonies, for the exclusion from membership, in any of their churches, of all persons who do not hold particular tenets, and bind themselves by covenant to observe the laws and duties of the spiritual corporation; for refusing baptism to all but *such* members and their *immediate* seed; and for “the seasonable and due suppression of Anabaptists, Familists, Antinomians, and all other like errors, which oppose, undermine, and slight the Scriptures, &c., . . . under a deceitful color of liberty of conscience.”

This recommendation, dated at Hartford the 18th of September, 1646, is, I suppose, substantially the measure which Winslow and others had designed for Plymouth. John Brown and Timothy Hatherly, the two Assistants, who, with Standish, as mentioned above, opposed them, were the Plymouth Com-

missioners for that year; and their dissent is signified by the note which follows the recommendation, in these words: "The Commissioners of Plymouth desire further considerations concerning this advice given to the General Court."

The opponents of this order were not content with having stopped its progress. Winslow goes on to say, "After this, the first exceptor" (*i.e.*, Vassall the Deputy, who singly objected to its consideration at the Court of Elections) "having been observed to tender the view of a scroll from man to man, it came at length to be tendered to myself; and withal, said he (Vassall), it may be you will not like this. Having read it, I told him *I utterly abhorred it*, as such as would make us odious to all Christian commonweals. . . . *The sum of it was, to allow and maintain full and free tolerance of religion to all men that would preserve the civil peace, and submit unto Government*; and there was no limitation or exception against Turk, Jew, Papist, Arian, Socinian, Nicholaytan, Familist, or any other," &c.

Vassall having desired the Governor to submit his proposition to the consideration of the Court, the Governor and others, especially Winslow and Prince, "expressed the sad consequences (that) would follow. Yet, notwithstanding, it was required, according to order, to be voted. But the Governor *would not suffer it to come to vote*, as being that indeed (which) would eat out the power of godliness," &c.

Winslow adds below, "You would have admired to have seen how sweet *this carrion* relished to the palate of *most of the Deputies*." He also designates Vassall, anonymously, as "the ringleader of this rout," and the one who had "made beforehand (*i.e.*, brought over to his own side) Standish, the two other Assistants, and many of the Deputies."

To which of the leaders in this contest the name of factionist most justly belongs, it is not difficult to determine. On one side, official power was perverted to prevent the exercise of a

fundamental and vital privilege of a representative and legislative Assembly, the free expression of its collective will and judgment upon the subjects brought before it: on the other side, the claim made is simply to be free to discharge the duty which they were sent by their constituents to perform. On one side, a measure is concocted in a thin Court of Assistants; next so managed as to be entered upon the waste-book in an improper General Court; and this surreptitious entry is afterwards arbitrarily refused to be expunged, in despite of the wishes and rights of the first and only Court in which the question could legally be debated. The other party, on the contrary, brings forward its favorite measure openly: it is shown frankly "from man to man;" and even to the leader of the hostile party, with a courteous and modest doubt of his approval. Hutchinson gives Vassall the character of "a gentleman of a pleasant, affable disposition;" and even Hubbard allows that he was "a man of a pleasant and facetious wit;" and, as he was accustomed to the urbanity and more liberal intercourse of a large and wealthy metropolis, it was natural that he should wish to soften down the rigid and exclusive spirit that spread gloom and chill over Colonial society. He was no bigot or fanatic, but allowed to others the same liberty of conscience which he claimed for himself. When he found his efforts in favor of civil and religious freedom unavailing, he quietly left the scene of contest. The principles which he advocated on the occasion alluded to, as well as those which Winthrop charges him with suggesting and abetting the year following, in connection with the petition of Dr. Childe and others, are now the boasted foundation and corner-stone of our civil and political system; while those upheld by his accusers are banished to the darkest and most enslaved regions of the earth (Hutch., i. 145; Mass. Hist. Coll., 2d ser., vol. vi., p. 500; Winth., ii. 260).

Mr. DEANE read a portion of a letter from William Palfrey to John Wilkes, of London, on the Boston Massacre, as follows:—

*Letter from William Palfrey to John Wilkes.*

MARCH 13. [1770]

I was oblig'd to break off the above by the alarm of ringing a Bell which I at first imagin'd to be for fire, & being not quite recover'd of my late illness did not quit the house but sent my servant to see where it was. He very soon return'd & told me there was no fire but that some of the inhabitants & soldiers were fighting near King Street. I immediately ran out towards the scene of action & had just got to the East end of the Court house which makes the front of King Street, when I heard the discharge of six or seven musquetts. I ran with many others towards the place, where I was witness to one of the most shocking scenes that ever was exhibited in a Christian Country. Three unhappy victims lay weltering in their gore; two others mortally wounded, & six others dangerously. This inhuman piece of barbarity was perpetrated by a party of eight men under the command of one Cap<sup>t</sup> Tho<sup>s</sup> Preston of the 29<sup>th</sup> Regiment. All the bells in Town were immediately rung. The inhabitants gather'd. Some in attempting to remove the dead & wounded were threaten'd & wounded by the soldiers. The Governor met his Council the same night, & he requested the people to disperse and promis'd they should have justice done them. They very justly urg'd to His Honor that the course of justice had been always hitherto evaded or obstructed in favor of the soldiery, and they were determin'd not to disperse till Cap<sup>t</sup> Preston was committed. Accordingly at three o'clock in the morning he was taken into custody & committed.

The return of morning exhibited a most shocking spectacle; the gutters of the street running with blood, & the snow on the ground dyed crimson with the blood & brains of our fellow citizens.

I went the next morning to view one of the bodies; when I was call'd upon a jury of inquest. In the course of the examination many witnesses were sworn, which enables me to give you a more circumstantial account of the matter than you may possibly receive from others, unless they had the same advantage.

I have frequently mention'd to you the repeated abuses & insults which have been offer'd by the Military to the inhabitants & Civil

authority of this town. In most of their small skirmishes lately they have been worsted, which has irritated them to a great degree. Add to this the insolent behavior of the 16<sup>th</sup> Reg<sup>t</sup> at New York which greatly encourag'd those here to a repetition of their abusive behavior.

It appear'd by the oaths of credible witnesses that Soldiers had been to the houses of some of their friends the Sunday Evening before this tragical event happen'd, and desir'd them, as they tender'd their own safety, to keep out of the way the two nights following: that there would be more blood shed then, than ever was known since the country had been settled. The next night an attack was begun at the same hour in eight different parts of the town, by a number of Soldiers arm'd with cutlasses & bayonets, who insulted & wounded divers of the inhabitants. At the house call'd Murray's Barracks a small distance from King Street they abus'd a number of Lads, who however soon beat them into their quarters; from whence they immediately return'd with a large reinforcement. The lads had left the spot & went thro' a lane towards King Street, at the corner of which stands the house improv'd by the Commissioners. A centinel was plac'd near the door.\* The soldiers in their pursuit brandish'd their swords at several persons who were quietly passing the street; one of them who ask'd them whether they intended to kill the inhabitants, was answered, "Yes, by G-d, root & branch." They afterwards met two officers & asked them what was the matter, they answered you'll see presently. The centinel at the Custom house door on seeing the lads approach loaded his piece, which they seeing gather'd near and laugh'd at him without offering any other insult. Cap<sup>t</sup> Preston who was officer of the day, was at his lodgings, & being inform'd there was a disturbance in King street went to the Main Guard, from whence he took eight men & order'd them to load with ball. While he was proceeding from the Main Guard to the Custom house, which is not above forty yards distance, he was stop'd by one of his acquaintance who ask'd him if his mens' guns were loaded; he replied "yes." He was then ask'd if he intended to fire, answer'd "no by no means." He was ask'd the same questions by another, & replied in

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\* This has been Customary since the Regiments were quarter'd here. The town have ever since kept a strong military watch, not only to prevent a rescue of the prisoners which was threatened by the soldiers, but also to prevent the lower sort of our own people from making any attempt to revenge the murder of their brethren.

a hasty manner, "I know my duty." While he was thus engag'd in discourse, his men were swearing & pushing with their bayonets at the people who from a motive of curiosity had gather'd round, the Cap<sup>t</sup> then went on with his party, who push'd their way with their bayonets till they came to the Custom house door where they drew up in form.

They had stood at the Custom house but a few minutes when a snow ball struck the Grenadier on the Right. Cap<sup>t</sup> Preston then gave the word "Fire!" The soldiers made a short pause: he then said, "Damn you, why don't you fire"! This was sworn to by two witnesses. Twelve or thirteen others swore they heard the word "fire"! given, but could not tell by whom. One swore he took it to be by the Grenadier on the right who fir'd the first gun. Cap<sup>t</sup> Preston absolutely denies his giving any orders to fire, but says he said "Don't fire"! It is impossible, considering the Consternation people were in, to give such an account of the matter as would perfectly agree in every minute circumstance. It was however agreed by all the witnesses that no insult was offer'd to Cap<sup>t</sup> Preston or his party. It seems plain, upon the whole, that the Cap<sup>t</sup> must have had an intention of firing upon the people, notwithstanding his declaration to the contrary; otherwise, why should he order his men to load with ball?

There is a pretty good account of the whole matter in Edes' & Gill's paper of the 12<sup>th</sup> instant, which I should have sent, but intend this for the post as I chuse you should have as early an account as possible of this bloody tragedy.

The inhabitants, being justly alarmed at so atrocious a murder, assembled the next day to the number of upwards of three thousand, & chose a committee to wait on His Honor the L<sup>t</sup> Governor, to acquaint him that the repeated insults of the Military & the late Massacre render'd it impossible for the inhabitants & soldiers any longer to dwell together; & concluded with a request to His Honor to order the troops immediately to quit the town.

He return'd for answer Gov<sup>r</sup> Bernards old story, "that he had no authority over the Kings Troops," and added, that he had communicated their Message to Coll<sup>o</sup> Dalrymple, who in consideration of the part which the 29<sup>th</sup> had acted in the affair of the 5<sup>th</sup> inst, had agreed they should be sent to the Castle, about a league from the town, & that he would confine his own Regiment to their barracks. This answer was unanimously voted unsatisfactory, & the inhabitants determin'd to remain together until measures could be taken to oblige

the troops to quit the town. They voted another Message to His Honor, which he communicated to his Council, who were unanimously for the removal of the troops; to which with much difficulty Coll<sup>o</sup> Dalrymple at length consented. The 29<sup>th</sup> have since been sent down, & the embarkation of the 14<sup>th</sup> begins this day. We shall soon get rid of our Military inmates, & I hope the town will thereby be restor'd to its former state of tranquility.

Nothing can equal the spirit which was shown on this melancholly Occasion. The people, tho' drove almost to despair by this act of violence, and ready to take immediate vengeance on the offenders, were however restrain'd by the example & persuasion of many of those very men who have been on your side the water branded as incendiaries, & enemies of Great Britain. If there had ever been any intention in the Colonies to rebel, what a fair opening was here made! The military, without the least provocation, slaughtering the unarm'd, defenceless & innocent citizins. The Country for a great distance round was alarm'd & prepar'd themselves to join the people in Boston upon the first signal, & however despicable an opinion Coll<sup>o</sup> Dalrymple or his associates may entertain of the Bostonians, I assure you, Sir, forty thousand men could have been brot into the gates of this city at 48 hours warning.

On Thursday last the bodies of four of the unhappy sufferers were buried. The coffins form'd a junction in Kingstreet, and by the best calculation it was suppos'd ten thousand persons were present on the mournful occasion. And, to reflect on the consequences of G-r Barnard's & the Commissioners' execrable policy in procuring these troops to be quarter'd in the body of this Metropolis! I hope this fatal event will be properly resented by our fellow subjects in GB, & if a pardon should be solicited for the delinquents, which I suppose will be the case, that the whole nation will oppose it.

I cannot leave this subject without doing justice to Cap<sup>t</sup> Preston so far as to inform you that before this unfortunate event, he always behav'd himself unexceptionably & had the character of a sober, honest man & a good officer,—but Influence, fatal influence!

I have just heard that Coll<sup>o</sup> Dalrymple is a candidate for our Government. I pray God most heartily we may never be govern'd by a Scotchman, & above all by a Military Scotchman.

Mr. R. FROTHINGHAM stated the substance of a letter, on the same subject, which Lieutenant-Governor Hutch-

inson addressed to Lord Hillsborough, and which is recorded in Hutchinson's letter-books.

*Thomas Hutchinson to Lord Hillsborough.*

BOSTON, March, 1770.

MY LORD, — There has, for a long time, subsisted great animosities between the inhabitants of the town and the troops; and, on the 2d and 3d of this month, there were repeated skirmishes between small parties of the inhabitants and the soldiers in the streets. The soldiers were without their arms, and one or two of them were much hurt. The 5th, in the evening, near ten o'clock, one of the bells of the town; near where I dwell, was rung; and I supposed it to be for fire: but, in a few moments, several of the inhabitants came running into my house, entreating me immediately to come out, or the town would be all in blood; the soldiers having killed a great number of the inhabitants, and the people, in general, being about to arm themselves. I went out, without delay, in order to go to the Council Chamber, — as the people were killed in King Street, near to it; but I was soon surrounded by a great body of men, — many of them armed with clubs, and some with cutlasses, and all calling for their fire-arms. I discovered myself to them, and endeavored to prevail on them to hear me: but was soon obliged, for my own safety, to go into a house, and by a private way into King Street; the people having returned there, expecting me. After assuring them that a due inquiry should be made, and justice done, so far as was in my power, and prevailing with the commanding officer of the troops in the street to retire with them to their barracks, the people dispersed. Expresses had gone out to the neighboring towns, and the inhabitants were called out of their beds, many of whom armed themselves, but were stopped from coming into town by advice, that there was no further danger that night. A barrel of tar, which was carrying to the Beacon to be set on fire, was also sent back. Upon examination before two justices of the peace, Captain Preston of the twenty-ninth, who had command of the guard, was committed to prison, being charged with ordering the troops to fire; and seven or eight privates charged with firing. Four persons were killed; two more are said to be mortally wounded; divers others wounded, but not in such danger: among them is a gentleman of the town, who, standing at his door,



was shot in the arm, and the bone splintered. How far the affronts and abuses offered by the inhabitants may avail to excuse this action, is uncertain: but it is certain that nothing more unfortunate could have happened; for a very great part of the people are in a perfect frenzy by means of it.

I summoned all the members of the Council who were near enough, to meet the next morning. When I came to them, I found the selectmen of the town, and great part of the justices of the county, waiting for me at the Council Chamber, to represent to me their opinion of the absolute necessity of the troops being at a distance, that there might be no intercourse between the inhabitants and them, in order to prevent a further effusion of blood. The selectmen acquainted me they had been applied to to call a town-meeting, and that the inhabitants would be under no restraint whilst the troops were in the town. I let them know that I had no power to remove the troops. I then sent to desire Colonel Dalrymple and Colonel Carr to be present in Council. Soon after, a message came by a large committee from the town to me, being in Council. I told the Council also that the removal of the troops was not with me; and I desired them to consider what answer I could give to this application of the town, whilst Colonel Dalrymple, who had the command, was present. The principal quarrels had been with the twenty-ninth regiment; and, upon hearing from the Council what they had to urge, Colonel Dalrymple let me know that he was willing the twenty-ninth should go into the barracks at the castle, and engaged that the fourteenth should be so disposed in Boston as to prevent occasions of dispute between the inhabitants and the regiment. I thereupon signified to the committee of the town what Colonel Dalrymple had agreed to; repeating to them also what I had said to the selectmen, — that the ordering the troops did not lie with me. Upon report made to the town, they, by a general vote, declared they could not be satisfied unless both regiments were at the castle. I met the Council again in the afternoon; when the commanding officers of both regiments, and also Captain Caldwell of his Majesty's ship "Rose," were present. I would have desired some other Crown-officers to have been there; but I knew the Council would not consent to it. The town soon sent a second committee to me with their vote; which I required the Council to give me their advice upon. They advised me to desire Colonel Dalrymple to remove the fourteenth regiment also to the barracks at the castle; and, with one voice, most earnestly urged it upon me: and every one of

them deliberately gave his opinion at large, and generally gave this reason to support it, — that the people would most certainly drive out the troops, and that the inhabitants of other towns would join in it; and several of the gentlemen declared, that they did not judge from the general temper of the people only, but they knew it to be the determination, not of a mob, but of the generality of the principal inhabitants; and they added, that all the blood would be charged to me alone, for refusing to follow their unanimous advice, — in desiring that the quarters of a single regiment might be changed, in order to put an end to the animosities between the troops and the inhabitants, seeing Colonel Dalrymple would consent to it.

It now lay upon me to choose that side which had the fewest and least difficulties; and I weighed and compared them as well as the time I had for it would permit. I knew it was most regular for me to leave this matter entire to the commanding officer. I was sensible the troops were designed to be, upon occasion, employed under the direction of the civil magistrate; and that, at the castle, they would be too remote, in most cases, to answer that purpose. But then I considered they never had been used for that purpose; and there was no probability they ever would be, because no civil magistrate could be found under whose directions they might act: and they could be considered only as having a tendency to keep the inhabitants in some degree of awe; and even this was every day lessening; and the affronts the troops received were such, that there was no avoiding quarrels and slaughter. I thought not improbable, but I was not so sanguine as all the Council and the generality of the inhabitants were, that an open attack would be made on the troops; or, if there had been, that they could soon have been overpowered: but there was a moral certainty that the people of this town would have taken to their arms, and that the neighboring towns would have joined them, which would have brought on infinite confusion, and, if any violence had been begun, much bloodshed, the spirit being full as high now, as far as can be judged, as it was at the time of the Revolution, and the people four times as numerous. And it was most probable the confusion would have continued until the troops were overpowered; for Colonel Dalrymple assures me, that, in both regiments, he could not muster six hundred effective men at that time, nor have been able to have brought above four hundred together at one place.

Before I determined, I asked the opinion of the three officers of the Crown who were present, and of the Secretary; and they all

agreed, that I ought to comply with it; and I find since, that the commissioners of the customs, who are not affected by it, think I could not avoid it.

Upon my complying with this advice of Council, I acquainted the committee of the town with it; and Colonel Dalrymple promised them to send both regiments to the barracks at the castle.

Both Colonel Dalrymple and I wrote the next morning by express to General Gage. Copies of my letters I shall enclose to your lordship.

I have represented to your lordship, that the authority of Government is gone in all matters wherein the controversy between the kingdom and the colonies is concerned. There cannot be a plainer proof of it than I have now given to your lordship. The king, by his general, orders a part of his troops to be posted in Boston. The people oppose it, and declare they will, by force, compel these troops to leave the place where they are posted; which, if executed, would be levying war against the king, and one species of high treason. The greater proportion, by far, of the members of every branch of the Legislature or Executive power join in supporting the people in this. The few which remain are obliged to submit, and, unless the troops are, capable of maintaining their post by their own strength.

In the present case, every member of the Council, the justices of peace of Boston, and divers of other towns, every selectman of Boston, all the representatives of the town who were in town, the colonel of the Boston regiment, besides other officers and principal inhabitants of the town, and then the town in a body, when two or three thousand were present, made their application to me to effect the removal of the troops; and the temper was spreading for the next day. Application was made to me from the town of Roxbury; and although a great proportion of those who joined in the application made for the removal of the troops would not have dared to join in open opposition to them, yet I knew of none who would have joined in defending them.

I have been very far from exaggerating facts ever since I have had the honor of transmitting accounts of them to your lordship: but I should be culpable if I should omit communicating the true state of the Province; and I am sure, in the present instance, no exception can be taken here at what I have stated, because men of every order have, in the most open and strong manner, declared to me, that, at all events, the people are determined the troops, at all events, should leave the town.

The President said that his attention had recently been called to a letter of Charles II., which had long been preserved in the Winthrop Family, and which was the subject of a considerable note in Mr. Savage's last edition of the "History of New England," vol. i. p. 150.

The letter is as follows : —

BRUSSELLES, 8 April, 1660.

I haue so good information of the many good offices you haue done for me, that I cannot doute but you will continue the same affection, till you have perfected the worke you haue begun, which you may be most assured will be accompanied with such an acknowledgement from me that all the world shall take notice of the sence I haue of your kindnesse, and how greate an instrument you haue been in promoting the happynesse of your country : I haue no more to aske of you but to proceede in the same way and methode your owne vnderstanding suggests to you, and that you will belecue I will alwayes be,

Your affectionate frinde

CHARLES R.

It is wholly in the handwriting of the king, and is sealed with the royal arms. But it is evident that there never was any superscription or address of any sort upon it ; and it is only a matter of tradition that it was addressed to a member of the Winthrop Family. It has generally been said to have been written to John Winthrop, jun., Governor of Connecticut : but he had not been in England for fifteen years before it was written, nor did he go there again until two years after it was written ; and there was nothing which he had done on this side of the water which could have entitled him to such an expression of royal gratitude and confidence. His brother Stephen, who served in the Parliament armies, as well as in one of the Protector's Parliaments, had died a year before the letter was written. Only one of the family remains as the possible recipient of this epistle ; and this is Fitz John Winthrop, the son of the Governor of Connecticut, who succeeded his father in that office, after no very long interval.

*Fac Simile of a letter of King Charles II.*

*Brusselles 8 April 1660.*

I have so good information of the many good offices you have done for me, that I cannot doubt but you will continue the same affection, till you have perfected the worke you have begun, which you may be most assured will be accompanysed with such an acknowledgement from me that all the world shall take notice of the sence I have of your kindnesse, and how greate an instrument you have been in promoting the happynesse of your country: I have no more to aske of you but to proceede in the same way and methode your owne understanding suggests to you, and that you will beleieve I ~~ff~~ will always be,

*Your affectionate frinde*

*Charles R*



At the time this letter was written, Fitz John was a captain in his uncle Colonel Thomas Reade's regiment of foot, under General Monk. He had received his first commission as lieutenant in that regiment from Richard Cromwell, the Protector, dated 11th September, 1658. A second commission to be "captain-lieutenant" in the same regiment is signed at Coldstreame by George Monk, 21st December, 1659. A third commission, making him full captain in the same regiment, is signed 5th February, 1659, also by Monk. Still a fourth commission is found, making him a captain in the same regiment, signed by Monk, then Sir George Monk, General and Commander-in-chief, on the 23d of June, 1660, after the Restoration had been accomplished. And, finally, a certificate is found, bearing date 14th January, 1661, and signed by Monk as Duke of Albemarle, and by Lord Anglesey and Sir Edward Nicholas, allowing Captain Fitz John Winthrop to pass to London, and remain there for three months; although the officers who had served in the Parliament armies were forbidden to go there at all, on the ground that he "hath faithfully served his Ma<sup>ty</sup>, & did correspond & joyne with the said Duke of Albemarle in his most happy restoration."

It is plain from these facts, that the letter of Charles must have come into the possession of the family through Fitz John Winthrop; yet there may well be a doubt whether it was ever specially sent to him, or intended for him by the king.

Fitz John was born 14th March, 1638. He was thus less than twenty years of age when he received his first commission, and not much over twenty-one at the date of the Restoration. He went over to England to his mother's brother, Colonel Reade; and was probably glad to take service under his patronage, wherever that service might lead him.

It is quite unlikely, that, at so early an age, he could have done any thing to entitle himself to such a notice from the king; and certain it is, that he never received any such particu-

lar mark of the royal favor, as the letter promised, in 'after-years.

The whole mystery of the letter (if there be one) is unlocked by the following passage from Burnet's "History of his own Times" (vol. i. book i. p. 124, Edin. ed.), where, in giving a summary of affairs before the Restoration, Bishop Burnet says, that, while the king was in Holland, "Hide (afterwards Lord Chancellor Clarendon) was very busy. He wrote in the king's name to all the leading men in England, and *got the king to write a great many letters in a very obliging manner.*"

Hyde, it seems from Burnet, afterwards sent over Dr. Morley on a secret mission to England, and probably gave him a number of these "obliging letters," which he "had got the king to write," already signed and sealed with the royal signet, to be addressed and delivered as occasion should render expedient.

One of these letters may be seen in Burke's "Visitation of Seats and Arms" (vol. ii. p. 181), said to have been written to Sir John Rous, and the language of which bears the closest analogy to that which came into the possession of the Winthrops.

Another of these letters may be seen in Thane's "British Autography" (vol. ii. p. 42), addressed, as it is said, to Arthur Annesly, Esq. (afterwards Earl of Anglesey), and which was plainly the result of the same inspiration with the other two.

The Winthrop Letter is rather more complimentary and cordial than either of them, and would have been worthy (as Mr. Savage has suggested) of being addressed to Monk himself. Now, among the Winthrop family-portraits at New York, there is an original portrait of General Monk, which would seem to imply that some peculiar friendship had existed between him and some one of the Winthrop connection. Probably this letter may have come into the possession of the family from the same source and at the same time with that portrait.

The letter may have been originally sent to Colonel Thomas Reade, the uncle of Fitz John, and the commander of his regiment ; or perhaps to Sir George Downing, who also served the cause of the Restoration, and who was the great-uncle of Captain Fitz John Winthrop.

The main historical facts of the case are, that the letter was addressed to no one ; that there was no one of the name of Winthrop who seems to have been in a condition to have done enough to call forth such an expression of royal favor ; that the king, at the instigation of Clarendon, wrote a great many obliging letters, — probably leaving others to decide to whom many of them should be sent ; and that Fitz John Winthrop, who was then serving under Monk as a very young man, was in the way of procuring such an autograph, either through Colonel Reade, Sir George Downing, or General Monk himself.